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ABSTRACT

Described is the Appalachia Educational Laboratory's Home Oriented Preschool Education (HOPE), program which began as a model preschool program and later shifted to development of support materials for use with young children. Use in the program of paraprofessional home visitors, educational television programs and weekly classroom experiences is noted, advantages of these approaches (such as parent involvement) are listed, and positive results of the program are cited. Discussed is development of materials (including sets of competency based activities) for use in homes, day care settings, and classrooms. (LS)

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Home Oriented Preschool Education

by Alice Spriggs

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In 1968, with funds provided by the United States Office of Education, the Early Childhood Division of the Appalachia Educational Laboratory in Charleston, West Virginia developed a model preschool program. This program, Home Oriented Preschool Education or HOPE as it became known, centered around the child learning in the home.

The program consisted of three parts:

- (1) a paraprofessional home visitor who paid a weekly visit into the home of each child;
- (2) a daily, locally produced educational television program, "Around The Bend"; and
- (3) a weekly classroom experience.

Why was this three-part approach to education developed and applied? Research has shown that parents have unique advantages for working with their child:

- (1) the parent knows the child far better than any one else;
- (2) the instruction can be individualized to the child--a goal of other programs that do not have the one-to-one relationship;
- (3) learning can occur in many situations, situations that do not resemble the typical classroom: sorting the laundry, going to the store and fixing a meal would indicate just a few of these situations.

The use of a home visitor has its unique advantages:

- (1) a home visitor can be trained in the needed skills and attain the necessary knowledge to perform the job less expensively than training a degree teacher;

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- (2) a member of the local community can hold the job; this allows for more acceptance by the families involved;
- (3) a paraprofessional will be working with one or two children at a time; therefore, the planning can be individualized to that child's needs.

The advantages of using a television program include:

- (1) 97% of the homes in the area to be served have at least one television set;
- (2) children spend a great deal of time watching television and learning is occurring during that time; and
- (3) it is important for the parent and child to be able to share a specific experience and this can be done by watching television.

To support these efforts, AEL prepared daily television programs, weekly television guides and home visitor guides and classroom materials. Material for use to train home visitors was also developed and field tested.

The model program was in operation from 1968-1971. Children in this original HOPE program are now in grades three through seven. Data collected in 1975 indicated that these children had better attendance and higher grade point averages during grades one through three than did other children in the schools. The HOPE children also had higher math, reading and English scores on the Educational Development Series.

In 1972, the HOPE program was transferred from the United States Office of Education to the National Institute of Education. At this time, new approaches were taken.

Emphasis shifted from HOPE as a model program to the development of

support materials that could be used in a variety of programs that serve young children. To accomplish this objective, several major studies were conducted. These studies established a competency base for curriculum development; identified 59 developmental competencies normally attained by age six; provided sample learning activities documented by a panel of early childhood experts, Appalachian early childhood experts and Appalachian parents. Research was also conducted regarding how children best learn at each developmental age based on normal patterns of play.

Based on this research, emphasis was placed on the development of specific products during 1974 and 1975. This group of products is called AEL-Aids to Early Learning. They include:

- (1) Day Care and Home Learning Files. A set of activities designed for use by paraprofessionals working as home visitors or in a day care setting.
- (2) Classroom Files. A set of activities for use by a professional in a classroom setting.

Each file is separated into 59 sections containing 15 activities for each competency. This provides nearly 1,000 different activities in each file. Each file contains an instructional manual. Weekly age-graded lesson plans are developed to accompany the files.

Each day care and home file section contains a parent corner while each classroom file suggests a snack.

- (3) Mister Rogers' Neighborhood has been adopted for the daily television lesson. Weekly support materials, "AEL Visits Mister Rogers," is written each week for delivery into the home.

- (4) Two discussion guides, the Parent Guide and the Parent Coordinator Guide, are available for use with parenting groups.
- (5) The Home Visitor Training Materials provide pre-service and/or in-service for home visitors. These materials are modular in design and use a multi-media approach to training.

Currently, the Aids to Early Learning are being field tested in fifteen states in and out of Appalachia. These sites involve approximately 4,000 children and 325 teachers and home visitors in Head Start, Home Start, Day Care and public schools including some handicapped children. Based on these findings, further revisions will be made. The ultimate goal is a set of products that will be researched, tested and placed for use in situations that will provide a comprehensive education for young children.